

North Carolina Minority Health Facts

Hispanics/ Latinos

Office of Minority Health and State Center for Health Statistics

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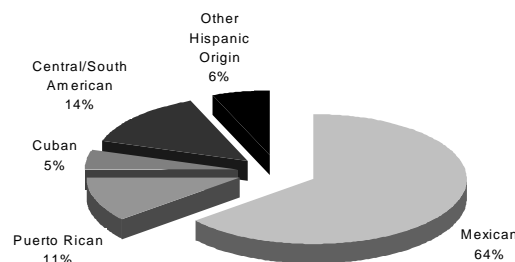
Demographics

According to the 1997 Census, Latinos* constitute approximately 11.1% (29.7 million) of the United States (U.S.) population. Latinos are projected to be the largest minority group in the country by the year 2010; by 2050, about 1 in 4 Americans will be Latino. The Latino population in the U.S. consists of people from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and countries of origin. Nationally, in 1994, Mexicans made up the largest Latino group (64%) followed by Central and South Americans (14%) and Puerto Ricans (11%). In the U.S., Latinos represent the largest foreign-born population group (44.2%); however, over half (55.8%) of all Latinos living in the U.S. are born here.

North Carolina has experienced rapid growth in its Latino population during the past ten years. Most of this increase can be attributed to high levels of migration due to economic opportunities in agriculture, construction and food industries, as well as high Latino birth rates. While precise data are not available, there are many estimates of the Latino population in North Carolina. In 1997, the Census Bureau projected the state's Latino population to be 149,390.¹ In 1996, a public health survey estimated the Latino population at 229,902.² In 1998, another survey estimated the Latino population to be 315,001.³ Although reliable data on country of origin is not readily available for North Carolina, the Mexican population is considered to be the largest Latino group in the state. Overall, the Latino population in the U.S. and North Carolina is relatively young, with a median age of 26 years.¹

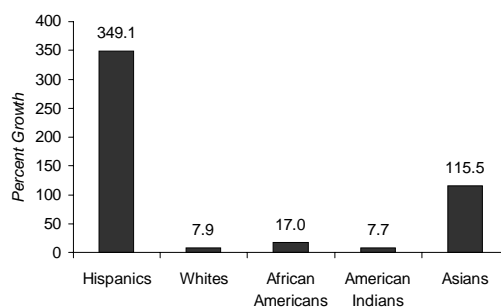
The Latino population's recent growth in North Carolina is evidenced by the rapid increase in the number of Latino children enrolled in the public school system. The percentage increase in the state's public school enrollment between the years 1990-91 and 1998-99 was higher among Latino children than other racial/ethnic groups.⁴ Birth rate data also portray this population growth (see page 3).

**Composition of
U.S. Latino Population, 1994**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**Percent Growth in North Carolina Public School
Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity from
1990-91 to 1998-99**



As is the case with other racial and ethnic minorities, Latinos are disproportionately affected by certain health problems. Latinos also face numerous barriers in accessing and using health care services.

Paying for Health Care

Poverty has been identified as a major barrier to receiving appropriate health care. Although the poverty rate for Latino families in the U.S. fell from 26.4% in 1996 to 24.7% in 1997, a large proportion of Latino families continue to live below the poverty level. While health insurance coverage plays a major role in improving access to health

*In this fact sheet, the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" have been used interchangeably.